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NEHA and NACCHO Fully Endorse the Environmental Health Workforce Act

Washington, DC, April 5, 2017 – The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) are proud to endorse the Environmental Health Workforce Act, a bill reintroduced today by Rep. Brenda L. Lawrence (D-MI) on behalf of the environmental health workforce. This bill ensures that there is a consistent set of guidelines and standards for the training and education of environmental health professionals.

"I am proud to introduce the Environmental Health Workforce Act," Rep. Lawrence said. "We learned many valuable and expensive lessons from the failures that occurred in Flint, Michigan. I promised to review and make changes to policies affecting environmental emergencies and this legislation does exactly that. It ensures that the workforce responsible for handling environmental and public health issues are capable. I am pleased to introduce this legislation and know that we are one step closer to securing the health and safety of Americans across the nation."

Currently, only 28 states require a credential for environmental health workers.

"Credentialed environmental health practitioners, where they exist, have strong science degrees, routinely partner with the regulated community, and understand cultural sensitivities because they live in the communities in which they serve. These valuable workforce characteristics help ensure a healthy and prosperous society," said David Dyjack, NEHA Executive Director and CEO.

“We are thrilled that Rep. Lawrence recognizes the incredibly important work of environmental health professionals for the health of our nation’s citizens. This legislation will save money, save lives, and protect our children’s future.”

“Protecting the safety of the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe requires that local health departments have a strong, capable environmental health workforce. This bill provides support for these hard working professionals that serve people in our communities every day,” said William Barnes, NACCHO Acting Executive Director and Chief Program Officer.

Since 1937 NEHA has offered a Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) credential, which defines a set of competencies, evidenced through testing and maintained through continuing education.

Given the diversity and complexity of recent environmental health issues that have been a high priority for public safety – lead contaminated drinking water, food tainted with E. coli, and potential outbreaks of Zika virus, this legislation is a key component to ensuring we have a highly skilled workforce to find the best solutions and protect future generations of Americans.

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About the National Environmental Health Association

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is a professional organization with members in the public and private sectors, academia and uniformed services. NEHA offers credentialing, training, education, networking, professional development, and policy involvement. Learn more about NEHA at www.neha.org and follow @nehaorg on Twitter.

About NACCHO

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit www.naccho.org and follow @NACCHOalerts on Twitter.